

Report Form Exchange Period Abroad 2015-2016
Please submit your report form and your report in English

To which foreign

university did you go: University of Aruba

Country: Aruba

<i>study period:</i>	1st semester
<i>start date study abroad:</i>	Classes started on the 31 st of August 2015 and the first semester finished on 22 nd of January when the resit exams of the first semester have ended.
<i>period of classes:</i>	As at the University of Groningen, the University of Aruba also uses a block system, which meant that the first block took place from 31 st of August until the 10 th of October and the second block took place from the 26 th of October until the 4 th of December.
<i>examination period:</i>	As follows from the block systems exams were held after each block, for the first block being from the 12 th of October until the 23 rd of October. The second block of exams was from the 7 th of December until the 18 th of December. The resit period for exams was from the 11 th of January until the 22 nd of January.
<i>did you follow a language course:</i>	no, classes were in Dutch so did not need to follow any language course, for those interested it might be nice to study Papiamentu, but you need to ask yourself how much would you use it.

Courses completed at the host university:
Arubaans Strafprocesrecht I
Arubaans Strafprocesrecht II
Arubaans Belastingrecht
Arubaans Arbeidsrecht
Arubaans Staatsrecht

For the mandatory exchange I went to Aruba, one of the Dutch Caribbean Islands, not a place you would immediately think of for going on exchange. However it is a great location to go on exchange, especially for Dutch people, I had never been to the Caribbean and going there for exchange, especially studying law is a great way to learn more about the relationship between Aruba and the Netherlands.

The courses I took were very interesting, in the sense that there are a lot of similarities between Aruban law and Dutch law. Some of the courses were also taught by people having a lot of experience in the field, the down side of that is that they aren't really teachers and thus their tests tend to be a bit different.

It might be a bit vague what they really want or what happened to me was that a teacher sent out a practice exam that ended up being almost the same as the actual exam. The exams are mostly essay question as most exams are in Groningen, in that sense it does not really differ all that much.

The law faculty of the University of Aruba operates in Dutch, and this is also how classes are taught, however I have experienced that the students communicate in Papiamentu a fair bit. Once they realize you do not speak Papiamentu they do try to speak Dutch, but it is not always as easy for them.

Aruba on its own is quite expensive since it is obviously an island and therefore has to import almost everything. When doing groceries for instance you will find a lot of products that one could

also find in the supermarket in the Netherlands, but if you would convert the prices back to euros it might be double or triple the amount you would pay for the same product in the Netherlands. This thus shows that if you are on a tighter budget you really need to search where you will do your groceries, because one store might be cheap on product A whereas product B is cheaper in another store.

In relation to study books I would suggest that you buy the necessary books in your home country if they are better available there. I did not do this because I was worried they would put too much of a burden on my luggage, however, I ended up having to order them in the Netherlands and have them imported into Aruba. This made the books more expensive, as well as causing the books to arrive quite late. Which obviously is a bit inconvenient, although the university has a small library where most study books are available to use in the study room of said library. So a top tip would be to have the books with you when you travel to Aruba to study here, also since there is a similar approach as in Groningen with small classes and quite interactive working groups, but also the lectures are more interactive and it really helps you if you prepare in advance.

I did not have to pay any fees at the University, however for printing you would need to get a code and pay for printing credit. In Groningen printing is very cheap compared to the University of Aruba since printing at the University of Aruba costs 20 cent per page (black and white).

If you have the Dutch nationality you will not have to worry about a residence permit, you are able to enjoy the island for up to 180 Days each year.

Since the exchange agreement between the Universities was agreed upon quite late deadlines for application weren't too strict when I applied, however it did have a deadline of the documents that I received from the University of Aruba, this deadline did already pass because the aforementioned delay in agreement between the Universities. I would therefore suggest you that you stick to the deadlines that the university sets you and make sure that you follow the instructions.

The University of Aruba is a quite small university and it follows from that that the law faculty is also relatively small. This results in a quite close contact between lectures but also between students. There is a difference in culture which I noticed, first of all it is not uncommon for people studying law in Aruba to be a bit older and have a working life as well as a family to look after, which makes it different from Groningen where there is also a more party life.

Since the University of Aruba offers no housing, and thus there is no campus or anything you will need to find your own housing. There are various different apartment complexes that offer housing for students/interns. I decided to opt for Perle D'Or, which is a cheaper hotel as well as it offers long term housing. The place is quite popular with Dutch interns, which makes it ideal to meet other people and spend time with them. There is a good and relatively cheap restaurant as well as a small bar where everybody tends to come together to drink. There is a pool on site. The rooms also have air-conditioning which is quite necessary with the warmth here.

I do believe that although the apartment complexes which advertise the long term rental a lot, it might be cheaper to go on Facebook or somewhere else on the internet to look for a room or apartment, since that might be cheaper. A lot of people after asking how much rent I paid (about 500 euros a month – this depended on the exchange rate between euros and florins) for only a small room told me that I could have rented for less if you know where to look. It's something worth considering, easiness versus cheapness.

There are also various supermarkets nearby and it takes you about 15 minutes to get to the university which is basically a long straight road where it is hard to get lost, it might be busy at certain times and traffic is different than it is in the Netherlands.

On the matter of the introduction program it should be noted that I arrived just after they had had the new introduction week for new students, since the faculty introduction was still to be held I joined the introduction of the law faculty. This introduction is intended for the first years and thus not very interesting for an older student if you look at the content, it will probably sound fairly familiar, however, it is a great way to get to know the university a bit and meet some people. Again, since it is a very small university it does not have a lot of exchange students, hence the lack of an introduction week especially for exchange students.

Although most people tend to rent a car on Aruba this is quite expensive and not easily done by a student that will not have any income, most interns that stayed at Perle D'Or did have some source of income making it more affordable for them to rent a car. I decided to buy a bike which I did for about 300 euros, and took that to university. It is doable, but you have to be very aware of traffic, first of all I would like to point out that you should always assume that people do not see you, since they are not used to people cycling. Secondly it is doable with a mountain bike to ride as far on the right side of the road, there is a small gutter but also usually some dirt track next to the road, a bit harder to cycle through but probably a bit safer and that is what I usually opted for.

Overall I enjoyed my stay in Aruba, I was positively surprised by the level and dedication of some students there. The level of courses was also good, I believe it is comparable to the courses in Groningen, the big difference is probably money wise, that renting a room is quite expensive and also groceries are relatively expensive. This is definitely something you need to be aware of, especially if you consider that I did not rent a car, which is generally speaking

favorable compared to cycling. I believe that in general a car would cost about 500 to 600 euros a month, although you might be able to find a used car, which is harder to find a good quality.